

CONGRATS TO ...

Missoula vocal ensemble **Dolce Canto**, recipients of the 2014 Dale Warland Singers Commission Award, which includes a \$5,000 prize to be used toward the creation of a new choral work. Artistic Director **Peter Park** accepted the award on the choir's behalf during Chorus America's 37th Annual Conference, June 11-14 in Washington, DC.

The award enables the choir to partner with Seattle composer John Muehleisen to create a new composition centered on the theme of peace, with original poetry by lyricist Charles Anthony Silvestri. The work will receive its world



Dolce Canto's spring concert

premiere in Missoula during Dolce Canto's upcoming season, and audiences will have the opportunity to personally interact with both the composer and lyricist. Chorus America, the leading choral advocacy organization in the United States, and the American Composers Forum have partnered to present this award in honor of Dale Warland's lifelong commitment to new music. Dolce Canto was selected for this award by an independent panel. "The exemplary leadership demonstrated by this deserving organization serves as a model for all choruses as they strive for success in their communities," said Ann Meier Baker, president and CEO of Chorus America. Previous winners of the award have included such nationally known groups as Chanticleer, Conspire, Anima, The Crossing, The Young People's Chorus of NYC and the Utah Chamber Artists. "For Dolce Canto to receive such national recognition is a spectacular honor both for us and for Missoula," says Park. "We are truly flattered and a bit awestruck." While Dolce Canto has not worked previously with the composer, Park says, "John is well respected within the choral community for his ability to create expressive music that fits the voice well. His works have been performed and recorded by some of the finest choral ensembles in this country and abroad." An established relationship already exists with lyricist Silvestri. He wrote the text for Dolce Canto's most recent commission, "Dreamsong," which premiered last season in a joint venture with the String Orchestra of the Rockies. Park has high hopes for this new collaboration between Muehleisen and Silvestri. "This is a partnership, not only of two great minds, but of wonderful human beings who both excel in tapping into the human spirit."

Writer **Leslie Budewitz** of Bigfork, who won the 2013 Agatha Award for Best First Novel for *Death at Dente*. The Agatha Awards celebrate the traditional mystery, in the vein of Dame Agatha Christie. One of the most prestigious awards in fiction, the Agatha Awards are given annually at the Malice Domestic Convention, held the first weekend of May in Bethesda, MD. *Death at Dente*, the first installment in Budewitz's series, The Food Lovers' Village Mysteries, was published in August, 2013. The sequel, *Crime Rib*, debuts July 1. Budewitz, a lawyer, is also the author of the writer's guide, *Books, Crooks and Counselors: How to Write Accurately About Criminal Law and Courtroom Procedure*. That book claimed the 2011 Agatha Award for Best Nonfiction, making Budewitz the first author to win Agatha Awards for both fiction and nonfiction.



Leslie Budewitz

Montana author **Rick Bass**, whose book, *All the Land to Hold Us*, was among three finalists for the 2014 Orion Book Award for fiction. *MaddAddam* by Margaret Atwood took this year's prize. The annual award is presented each spring to books that deepen the reader's connection to the natural world and represent excellence in writing. Over 250 books published in 2013 were considered for this year's awards.

Livingston author **Tim Cahill**, who is a member of the faculty at the Book Passage Travel Writers and Photographers Conference, Aug. 14-17 in Corte Madera, CA. Cahill has written a slew of travel books, including *A Wolverine Is Eating My Leg*, *Jaguars Ripped My Flesh*, and *Pass the Butterworms*. He is an editor at large for *Outside* magazine, and his work appears in *National Geographic Adventure*, *The New York Times Book Review*, and other national publications. Most recently, Cahill wrote the introduction for *The Best Travel Writing, Volume 9: True Stories from Around the World*. The four-day conference offers an array of writing and photography workshops and evening faculty presentations.

Montana filmmakers **Vera Brunner-Sung**, **Brooke Swaney** and **Jeri Rafter**, whose film, "Bella Vista," made its world premiere at the International Film Festival Rotterdam on Jan. 29. Written and directed by Missoula filmmaker Brunner-Sung, the film was shot entirely in Missoula and around the Mission Valley, with production helmed by Swaney and Rafter. "Bella



"Bella Vista" filmmakers Jeri Rafter, Vera Brunner-Sung and Brooke Swaney

Vista" explores themes of belonging, displacement, and finding home in the American West, through the experiences of a recently relocated English language instructor and her international students. The film is a thoroughly grassroots undertaking, from the use of many local actors to generous grants from the Montana Film Office, the Montana Arts Council, private donors, and a crowdfunding campaign. A reporter for the International Federation of Film Critics has hailed the film as a "best feature," and Brunner-Sung as a "strong voice" in new independent American film. Currently making festival rounds, the filmmakers are also planning a statewide tour. To see a trailer for the film, stills, and latest news, visit www.bellavistafilm.com.

The four artists who received \$4,620 in grants from the Myrna Loy Center in Helena's Grants to Artists program. The grants are part of the Myrna's ongoing efforts to support and encourage artists in all disciplines who are creating new works. Ceramic artist **Robert Harrison** received funds to help create an installation inspired by the Porzellansammlung porcelains of Dresden, Germany. He will exhibit his installation, titled "ReClaimed: White Told (Objects from Helena, Montana Collections)" at the Holter Museum of Art next January. Sculptor **Chip Clawson** was awarded a grant to purchase 3D sculpting software that will allow him to integrate computer technology and a 3D printer into his sculpting process; Clawson plans to show some of his new works at the Myrna Loy Center next winter. Painter **Dale Beckman** received support to create a new series of landscapes titled "Badlands," which will focus on the sculpted landscape of Makoshika State Park; and **Donna Davis** received a grant for a new poetry project called "We All Breathe the Same Sky." For details on the Grants to Artists program, visit myrnaloycenter.com.

Helena artist **Loren Kovich**, whose semi-abstract acrylic painting, "Green Frenzy," was recently included in *Acrylic Work, The Best of Acrylic Painting*, published by North Light Books of Cincinnati, OH. This is the seventh publication on painting that has included Kovich's work.



"Green Frenzy" by Loren Kovich

The **Montana Museum of Art and Culture** at The University of Montana, which recently received a sizeable bequest from a California couple with a love for Montana and art. The gift will come from alumna Suzanne Moore Crocker (1964) and her husband, Bruce, of Palo Alto. Their bequest establishes the Suzanne and Bruce Crocker Distinguished Director Fund, an endowment to support the salary and benefits of MMAC directors long into the future. The Crockers also are providing an annual contribution for the director's fund until their bequest is realized. The couple's contribution is a foundational gift for the university's efforts to secure private support for a new museum building. "This collection has such a broad scope of work," Suzanne Crocker said. "It's one of the premier collections in the region, and holds great opportunity to teach about many different eras in art and culture." Born in Kalispell, Crocker is a third-generation Montanan and has served on the UM Foundation Board of Trustees and the President's Advisory Council, and is currently on the museum's Advisory Council; her husband is presently serving on the Foundation board. "As a fine arts, cultural and educational resource, the Montana Museum of Art and Culture is a significant contributor to the university's academic research and scholarly activities," said UM President Royce Engstrom. "The Crocker family's generous gift allows for the continued stewardship of the collection, using the highest professional standards."

TRANSITIONS

So long and best wishes to **Bob Brown**, who retired April 12 from his post as executive director of the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula. Hired in 1991, when the county museum had just three buildings open to the public and a staff of three, he's presided over two decades of steady growth. The staff has doubled in size, and several more buildings are now open, including the new trolley barn, the Drummond Depot and the T-1 Post Headquarters. He's also twice led the museum through the rigorous accreditation process of the American Alliance of Museums, making it one of only six in Montana with the AAM's 10-year stamp of approval. The self-described "longest serving commander at Fort Missoula" also brought plenty of panache and good humor to his job, which included everything from lawn mowing and weed wacking to occasionally dressing up as Missoula founder C.P. Higgins or the post's first commander, Capt. Charles Rawn. "Basically his name has become synonymous with the museum," board member Don Spritzer told the *Missoulian*. Spritzer praised Brown for playing "an enormous role" in bringing the museum "from basically just a handful of buildings and a lot of things not complete to what we are today, which is just a wonderful institution ..." His replacement, **Matt Lautzenheiser**, arrives in Missoula this summer from northeastern Ohio, where he's been the director of the Dover Historical Society. Brown is confident the new director "can take us to the next level and make us truly a national treasure, which we know we are and we're beginning to get known for that."

— From the *Missoulian*, April 9

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Send us your good news

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Send your good news to Congrats, c/o *Lively Times*, 33651 Eagle Pass Trail, Charlo, MT 59824; or email: writeus@livelytimes.com.

If you include a digital photo, please make sure it's at least 200 lines per inch (lpi or dpi) or file size of over 500kb (no more than 2mb, please).

Congrats compiled by Kristi Niemeyer for *State of the Arts*